

Witchcraft, Sorcery, and Magic

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Witchcraft, sorcery, and magic relate to human encounters with and attempts to control the supernatural and are frequently described as ways to account for experiences and conditions that might not otherwise be explained. They appear as themes when humans are concerned with misfortune and harm, accusation and blame, risk and responsibility, and therefore are often analyzed as forms of social control and leveling, as well as ways of perceiving reality. Because they are closely related concepts in anthropology, the three terms often appear together in the same studies, yet have distinct meanings and intellectual histories. The enormous anthropological literature in this area is long running and wide in scope, with examples from nearly every part of the world.

The foundational concept is magic, which encompasses beliefs and behaviors in which the relationship between an act and its effect rests on analogy or a mystical connection rather than empirical or scientific validation. While at its core magic is an idea or belief, it manifests in acts and rituals, texts and spells, and objects such as amulets and talismans. Anthropological theories of magic, including attempts to treat it as either separate from or inseparable from religion, date back to the discipline's mid-nineteenth-century origins and reached a zenith in the mid-twentieth century through fieldwork-based ethnographic research, especially connected to the structural–functional school of thought.

Witchcraft and sorcery are terms that describe how humans engage with magic. Witches and sorcerers appear with remarkable consistency among worldviews that posit the existence of magic. While in the popular imagination the two roles may blur, usage is quite conventionalized in anthropology, owing to the impact of E. E. Evans-Pritchard's influential study of the Azande, first published in 1937.

Following Evans-Pritchard's lead, anthropologists nearly always use the term “witch” to identify people suspected of practicing, either deliberately or unconsciously, socially prohibited forms of magic, among other characteristics, and who are thus often scapegoats, members of persecuted groups, and reflective of social tensions, for example within close-knit communities or kin groups. In some cases, the witch is not a person but a substance or supernumerary organ inside a person's body. Witchcraft allegations tend to erupt in waves—“crazes”—in response to or along the lines of social tensions. Such tension may be inherent in social organization or, as the most recent research documents, perceived as an adjustment to modernity and social change. In contrast, “sorcerers” intentionally take on the role of magical practitioner, engaging in activity often labeled by others as magic with ill or evil intent. While some writers define sorcery simply as the use of magic, in a morally neutral sense, more typically the anthropological

use of the term highlights efforts to manipulate supernatural forces for malicious or deviant purposes.

Paradoxically, the self-identified practitioners of contemporary witchcraft, Wicca, or Neo-Paganism of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries represent a significant contrast both to the scholarly terminology and to the documented history of witchcraft. These participants constitute a specific identity group or religious movement today and will be treated briefly later in this entry. In this respect, the term witch has a bifurcated use similar to that of shaman, with scholarly consensus diverging from some popular adoption. Even among anthropologists, some use the terms witch and sorcerer, like shaman, widely—as broad labels that help make sense of patterns in the ethnographic literature—while others reserve them for more narrowly delineated, geographically or historically specific examples.

The material in this entry extends this introductory overview by emphasizing key ideas in anthropological treatments of magic, witchcraft, and sorcery and pointing toward prominent works of scholarship from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century.

Magic: Intellectual history of a concept

Mirroring theoretical emphases in anthropology as a whole, the main ways of explaining and asking questions about magic—as well as witchcraft and sorcery—have been the intellectualist, functionalist and structural-functionalist, and symbolist approaches. As used in the Western intellectual tradition, until recently magic has most frequently been attributed to non-Western peoples, cultural others, or perceived European pasts, although all major world religions have some concept of magic. In keeping with the paradigms of the times, anthropologists of the nineteenth and early twentieth century viewed magic in an evolutionary framework, as a characteristic of early stages of cultural development or human progress. Notably, Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917) and James G. Frazer (1854–1941) hypothesized that magic was a precursor to religion and science. Given that it assumes primitive people used magic as a way of explaining causality, their approach is often labeled as intellectualist. Magic was a way to explain things that could not otherwise be understood or accounted for. Rejecting the intellectualist premise, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939) instead saw magic as a characteristic of how primitive minds perceived the world, qualitatively distinct from rational thinking; Lévy-Bruhl's arguments are often referred to as part of the “primitive mentalities debate” of the 1920s.

With remarkable persistence, subsequent generations of anthropologists have revisited the arguments about magic developed by Tylor, Frazer, and Lévy-Bruhl. Later writers found kernels of insight in these social evolution-era writings, while largely discarding their ethnocentrism. Foundational social theorists such as Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Marcel Mauss all argued that magic and religion were distinct and separate realms, representing fundamentally different human ways of classifying and understanding the world and corresponding to different levels of social organization and institutional development. Nevertheless, the claim that magic and religion are

qualitatively different phenomena has been rejected by numerous anthropologists for nearly a century. Some authors see strong similarities among ethnographic cases, suggesting a blurry distinction at best between magical and religious rituals.

Apart from their evolutionist framework, some of the early theorists also contributed vocabulary related to the description of magic that persist in anthropology and folklore studies today, even as their underlying arguments are rejected. Frazer suggested that primitive magic beliefs assumed a sympathetic link between unconnected objects, which could take the form of homeopathic magic (magic of similarity) or contagious magic (magic of touch.) In examples of magic where a desired effect resembles its cause, or an effect is produced by modeling the desired result, magic of similarity is at work. The idea that seeds should be planted as a crescent moon is enlarging, or that eating walnuts will make the brain healthy, are examples. To Frazer, a connection also occurs between objects once actually connected, as posited in contagious magic. Examples include manipulation of hair, nail clippings, or a footprint to affect the person from whom they came, or touching a potato to a wart and then throwing away the potato. Some examples combine both kinds of magic, such as performing a curse on a doll made with clothing from the targeted person. Frazer's vocabulary and categorization reflect the intellectualist stance in their attention to how magical ideas work and in the effort to identify the principles organizing magic.

Another long-lasting term to emerge in the late nineteenth century describes a supernatural force that is positive, prestigious, and powerful. Tylor and others had been asserting that animism—the attribution of a soul to all living and inanimate things—was the earliest, most fundamental form of spiritual belief among humans. In this intellectual context, some researchers of the era found useful the Pacific Islands' concept of *mana*. *Mana* is the impersonal magical force associated with animae, or the souls of nonhumans. While a culturally specific term, the word has been applied as a general scientific concept to designate positive forms of magical power.

A second major anthropological approach to understanding magic is functionalism. Functionalist understandings of magic nearly always emphasize magic as a way of responding to psychological needs, arguing for example that people turn to magic in times of anxiety and uncertainty. Magical activities are a way to gain relief and confidence, perhaps ensuring that everything possible has been done to take control, achieve success, and minimize risks. This approach developed during the period when anthropological research was increasingly based on empirical data produced through ethnographic fieldwork. The most important figure associated with this argument was Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942), a central contributor to the development of functionalism, particularly with a psychological bent, in the anthropology of the 1920s through to the 1940s. Working with voluminous data from lengthy fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands of Melanesia, Malinowski's observations about the circumstances in which islanders use magic—or in other cases feel they do not need to use magic—support that idea that magic serves a psychological function by reducing uncertainty and raising confidence ([1935] 1965; 1955). For example, Malinowski noted that the Trobrianders used magic when fishing in the open seas but not in safe lagoons. While never failing to apply empirical knowledge to agriculture, they still used magic to ensure successful gardening.

Malinowski used his discoveries to weigh in on the primitive mentalities debate. He rejected Lévy-Bruhl's idea that primitive people were irrational because, in some circumstances, they used magic. Lévy-Bruhl held that rational thinking was associated with developed societies while primitive people's thinking was mystical and prelogical, yet Malinowski insisted that the Trobriand Islanders were capable of, and regularly used, thinking that was empirical and more or less scientific in nature. While Malinowski agreed with earlier theorists that magic and religion were separate spheres—magic having to do with private, utilitarian needs; religion with public and institutional needs—he argued that magic and religion ultimately served the same functions.

Several more recent researchers, and countless university students of anthropology, have confirmed Malinowski's psychological functionalism with examples of superstitions and magical rituals from their own cultures. Gmelch (2010) is a widely read application of Malinowski's basic claims to American baseball, connecting athletes' use of rituals, taboos, and fetishes to the reduction of risk and uncertainty.

While the primitive mentality claim is easily dismissed today, the possibility that magic represents a way of thinking fundamentally in contrast to science has remained enticing and is often taken up by anthropologists interested in the importance of symbols and symbolic relationships as features of culture. Recent theorists do not maintain that whole peoples engage magical, and not scientific, thought. Rather, they raise the possibility that magic is a way of thinking and perceiving, distinct from evidence-based thought, and engaged in by some people or populations, at some times, in some conditions. The idea of a distinctive magical worldview has also found credence in fields outside of anthropology. Current-day psychology and psychiatry use the term magical thinking to describe beliefs in causal relationships that do not have an empirical basis: for example, among children or the mentally ill. The term is also sometimes used to characterize the logic in pseudoscientific claims.

Because the practice of magic inevitably requires the use of language, anthropologists have analyzed the relationship between magical power and words. Malinowski took up this issue in his 1935 *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, observing that the power of magic was related to the power of all language, as humans speak about and to some degree control their world through language. This argument was elaborated by Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, exploring a similarity in human beliefs about the power of words and concepts of magical power. To Tambiah (1968), magic is better understood as a form of performance than as ill-informed science. Like language in other performative contexts, such as theater, oratory, and religion broadly, the language of magic is not like the language of everyday life. It is likely to have specialized vocabulary—perhaps archaic or foreign, perhaps secret—and specialized forms such as incantations, spells, prayers, or chants. The ability to perform such language effectively is part of the role of the magician, however she or he is identified in the culture.

Magic in relation to witchcraft and sorcery: The Azande example

Not surprisingly, some of the ideas developed in the anthropological study of magic also appear in the literature on witchcraft and sorcery. Conditions that lead to fissures

in social relationships, conflicts of interest, and cognitive jarring recur among many populations separated in time and space. Worldviews that develop conceptions of magic, witchcraft, and sorcery, while varying in specific details, share certain similarities in how they conceive of, and respond to, misfortune and harm. A goal of many mid-twentieth-century studies of magic and witchcraft, especially those conducted by anthropologists in the British structural-functional school, was to identify these patterns and discern features in social organization that might account for predictable variations.

The most highly regarded and influential explanation of magic as a distinct way of thinking comes from E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1902–73), whose work among the Azande of North Central Africa in the late 1920s, published in its earliest form in 1929, constituted one of the fullest early fieldwork-based accounts of magic, witchcraft, and sorcery. (In Evans-Pritchard's writings, "Azande" is a plural form, while "Zande" is used as an adjective and singular form. Contemporary writers use "Zande" only.) His book *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande* ([1937] 1976) was groundbreaking in its time for its relatively neutral, nonjudgmental stance on the validity of Zande beliefs. Evans-Pritchard's widely read work yielded the differentiation of witchcraft and sorcery, introduced near the start of this entry, that remains conventional in anthropology today; however, the degree to which the dichotomy is universal or cross-culturally valid, even within sub-Saharan Africa, is debated. Drawing on the Azande's own distinction, sorcerers intentionally seek to affect—likely to harm—others. They have studied and acquired skills to apply spells, carry out rituals, or use objects to afflict others. In contrast, the power of witches is unconscious and innate.

To the Azande, witchcraft resides in *mangu*, a substance in the witch's belly, inherited from a parent of the same sex. The substance leads something of a life of its own and can independently afflict people, especially those with whom the witch (likely unaware of the substance) has disagreement. Azande have developed rituals to protect against witchcraft, as well as a legal system to identify witches and resolve conflicts with their victims. Zande identification of witches relies on a variety of oracles, of escalating power and reliability, ranging from simple do-it-yourself tests to assistance from respected diviners.

Perhaps the greatest impact of Evans-Pritchard's work came from his observations about the circumstances in which Azande invoke beliefs in magic. He emphasized magic, witchcraft, and sorcery as explanations of misfortune, raised when no other explanation is possible, in circumstances others might attribute to bad luck. For example, he described anecdotally how a person walking down a path might stub his toe on a log. A Zande would understand that the toe was injured because it struck a log but why that person happened to be hurt at that time by that log could only be explained as a result of witchcraft. Evans-Pritchard saw witchcraft as part of an understanding of the chain of causation behind events, explaining synchronicity or chance.

Because Evans-Pritchard paid a great deal of attention to how witchcraft allegations erupt between people in conflicting social roles or where social tension is predictable, his approach is squarely within the mid-twentieth-century theoretical paradigm of structural functionalism. This orientation long dominated anthropological studies

of witchcraft and sorcery, as evidenced in two multiauthor collections, both first published in 1970: *Witchcraft: Confessions and Accusations*, edited by Mary Douglas, and *Witchcraft and Sorcery*, edited by Max Marwick (with a second edition in 1982). Taken as snapshots of scholarship on the topics, published from the 1929 through the 1970s, many of the authors represented operated within the structural–functional framework launched by Evans-Pritchard, viewing witchcraft as a means of social control that could be understood through analysis of social structure.

Witchcraft: Delineating consistent features

Some scholars, viewing the extensive anthropological and historical literature on witchcraft, have noted prominent social factors and/or key components of worldview that typify all examples. Such integrations range from minimalist views that see only a small number of unifying factors to lengthy and highly specific trait lists that see a fundamental similarity in disparate examples. For example, Fiona Bowie (2006, 200–202) points out the pervasiveness of two central concepts at the core of all examples of witchcraft cross-culturally and through history. First, the idea of a life force, essence, or energy within people, and possibly in animals, objects, and the natural world. Azande *mangu* is an example of this concept. Because such a life force can potentially be harmed or manipulated by others, a specialist—a diviner—may be called on to deflect the attack or to identify the assailant. Second, the idea of limited good: if there is only so much fortune, health, and happiness to go around, anyone who has a great deal of these or suddenly gains them may be suspected of profiting at someone else's expense. In cultures with the idea of limited good, people are inclined to hide good fortune and level themselves within the community.

Bowie points out that these ideas, with regionally and culturally specific details depending on the part of the world, appear as beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery, or in the related phenomenon of the evil eye (involving the ability to cause harm through a gaze, motivated by envy), or both. Despite some consistent similarities in worldviews of witchcraft and sorcery, Bowie also notes that the terms witchcraft and witch are used in disparate ways by scholars and the general public to refer to four distinct phenomena: the idea of maleficence, or harmful supernatural action, developed in medieval and early modern Europe; those identified as adversaries by Christian church reformers; African witchcraft and sorcery as documented by Evans-Pritchard; the present-day Wiccan or contemporary pagan movement (2006, 201–2). To Bowie, these phenomena cannot be reduced to a single pattern and must be treated separately.

Another minimalist when it comes to delineating witchcraft is Mary Douglas: “The symbols of what we recognize across the globe as witchcraft all build on the theme of vulnerable internal goodness attacked by external power. But these symbols vary according to local patterns of meaning and, above all, according to variations in the social structure” (1970, xxvi). Douglas identifies only two main patterns of witch belief—those where the witch is an outsider and those where she or he is an internal enemy—which yield subclassifications according to the kinds of social relationships typifying witch roles and allegations in each culture (1970, xxvi–xxviii).

In contrast to the succinct conceptions of Bowie and Douglas, some writers prefer to emphasize a general, worldwide uniformity in witchcraft and sorcery, whether in sub-Saharan Africa, Melanesia and the Philippines, Europe, or among Native Americans. Lists of characteristics associated with witches anywhere in the world might include nocturnal activity, flight, community meetings or sabbats, and ritual murder.

Witchcraft beyond Evans-Pritchard

Many structural–functionalist accounts argued that, aside from witch persecution in historic Europe, witchcraft is benign or even of positive benefit to a community. A classic ethnographic work that advances this claim is Clyde Kluckhohn's study of the Navaho ([1944] 1967). Kluckhohn (1905–60) observed that belief in witchcraft contributed positively to society by encouraging generosity, conformity to social values, and by leveling economic differences, as community members sought to avoid accusations of witchcraft. Like Malinowski, Kluckhohn saw psychological functions to witchcraft as well, with frustrations being vented at scapegoated individuals and community ties being affirmed through curing rituals for witchcraft-produced illnesses.

Not all agree with Evans-Pritchard and Kluckhohn that witchcraft is a useful way to air and resolve social tensions. Bowie (2006, 207–12) contrasts the structural–functional approach with alternative interpretations, including Robert Brain's (1970) study of child witches among the Bangwa of Cameroon. As with the Azande, witchcraft accusations follow lines of social tension, for example among children with the same father but different mothers, rivals for resources and inheritance. But rather than view the case strictly through a structural–functional lens, Brain utilizes food resource theory, observing that confessions of witchcraft are rewarded with a protein-rich meal, enticing for youth in a resource-scarce environment.

Some also note that structural–functional interpretations of witchcraft fail to adequately draw attention to the genuine injustice associated with some witchcraft accusations, including in sub-Saharan Africa today. Scholar-activists with concern for human rights and religious tolerance have documented present-day injustice, including violence, toward people accused of witchcraft, especially in Africa. The Western history of persecution of suspected witches, especially during the medieval and early modern periods, is well documented. Complicatedly, some anti-witchcraft activists within as well as outside of Africa advocate from the position of evangelical Christianity. Their ultimate goal is to diminish traditional African religion by drawing attention to injustices associated with witchcraft and sorcery as part of those indigenous belief systems.

A scholarly study that combines structural–functional attention to witchcraft's association with social tension with a contemporary concern for injustice is Felicity Thomas's (2007) account of witchcraft and HIV/AIDS in Namibia. Because some Namibians blame HIV/AIDS on immoral behavior, many patients attribute their illness to witchcraft, a socially acceptable explanation. However, because patients also want to avoid witchcraft accusations—perhaps by avoiding assistance from family networks that might result in the appearance of sudden wealth or good fortune—they

may delay medical assistance or not utilize the help of family and friends when needed.

Sorcery

While witchcraft exists as a form of scapegoating and accusations—a method of explaining causation and healing, or avoiding, social rifts—other practitioners around the world actively seek to harness supernatural power in order to affect others or control the conditions around them.

As typically used in the anthropological literature, sorcery is a pragmatic, conscious practice, involving acts of magic and leading to personal power for the practitioner. Sorcerers typically must learn the texts, practices, rituals, or other components of magic as understood in their culture; such knowledge is esoteric and not normally available to everyone. Like other specialists documented in anthropology, such as shamans and diviners, the sorcerer may work on behalf of clients. Depending on the context, sorcery may be viewed as suspicious, fearful, or prohibited behavior, or a powerful means to right social wrongs and resolve conflicts. To contemporary anthropologists, the practices of sorcery offer opportunities to study how consciousness is formed and how humans constitute, and operate within, reality. An example in this area is Bruce Kapferer's *The Feast of the Sorcerer: Practices of Consciousness and Power* (1997), based on research among Sinhalese Buddhists in Sri Lanka. Kapferer carried out a detailed study of a ritual of exorcism, showing how sorcery and other aspects of social life are intertwined.

As with many examples in the history of anthropological terminology, conventional understandings of sorcery date back to the influential pioneering studies that initially made the term significant in the field. It has already been shown how E. E. Evans-Pritchard's study of the Azande contributed the convenient distinction between witchcraft and sorcery and emphasized sorcery as magic intended to cause harm. Another early ethnography that documents essentially the same dichotomy is *Sorcerers of Dobu* (1932) by Reo Fortune (1903–79). For the Dobu of the Western Pacific, witch and sorcerer were roles assigned by gender: "Witchcraft is the woman's prerogative, sorcery the man's. A witch does all of her work in spirit form while her body sleeps ... The man, as sorcerer, has the monopoly of causing sickness and death by using spells on the personal belongings of the victim" (Fortune 1932, 150). Dobuan men and women feared each other's power and viewed one another with considerable suspicion.

To Evans-Pritchard and Fortune, sorcery is destructive if not illicit. In other literature, however, sorcery is shown to be morally complex but not invariably harmful. Malinowski's early, detailed work in the Trobriand Islands—which so influentially shaped conventional uses of the concept of magic—also documented sorcery. In the Trobriands, sorcery was both a criminal practice and a form of punishment, depending on the agent. Naomi McPherson (1991), working in the same region in the 1980s, takes this double-edged example as an opportunity to study social deviance and attitudes toward it, emphasizing how and under what conditions particular behavior is labeled as socially unacceptable. To the Kabana of Papua New Guinea, there are subtle

lines between sorcery as deviance and sorcery as a way to control deviance, which McPherson found could only be teased out through careful examination of human interactions and community attitudes toward behavior.

A desire for more subtle and accurate vocabulary leads some specialists on the Amazon region to use the terms “assault sorcery” and “dark shamanism” to specify the practice of injurious magic intended to afflict or to bring physical harm or death to victims. Researchers in this area attribute such patterns to intervillage and interethnic tensions within the context of violent political situations in the region (Whitehead and Wright 2004). The role of such sorcerers is distinct from the more typical shamans of the region, who should be perceived as healers who work beneficially on behalf of clients.

Contemporary witchcraft or Neo-Paganism

In the West, long before there was a discipline of anthropology based on ethnographic study, there were popular and artistic images of the witch. These enduring images have roots in creative works of Shakespeare's era and earlier, as well as in nineteenth-century Romantic literature. Such images form a backdrop to the twentieth-century religious movements identified as paganism, Wicca, or simply as witchcraft, which do not conform to the beliefs, practices, and social patterns conventionally described by anthropologists as witchcraft. Contemporary witchcraft can be traced to the research and writings of Margaret Murray and Charles Godfrey Leland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Both argued that pre-Christian European pagan fertility cults had survived in unbroken but esoteric traditions, maintained by people in the role of witch. Their work was academic and detailed but ultimately rejected by scholars later in the twentieth century, though Murray is recognized today as a pioneering woman in archaeology and the study of ancient Egypt. The true popularizer of contemporary Wicca was Gerald Gardner, who developed the ideas of Murray, in particular, and claimed that the practices of his British coven went back to Paleolithic times. Through a series of books published in the middle of the twentieth century, Gardner inspired what are variously called the pagan, Wicca, or occult communities today. A significant body of ethnographic literature devoted to documenting such communities has been emerging in anthropology, folklore studies, and related fields.

As already seen, understandings of witchcraft fall into two basic patterns: allegations *about* witchcraft purportedly practiced by others and the understandings associated with people who claim identity as witches or related roles. A similar bifurcation characterizes Satanism. Throughout most of Western history, periodic panics or allegations of satanic practices have erupted, often with roots in social tensions similar to those associated with witchcraft accusations. A significant satanic scare flared in North America and Europe in the 1980s, most likely based in rumors, urban myths, and in evidence associated with a few highly publicized courtroom trials. The public was captivated by lurid assertions that underground organizations were engaged in intentional satanic activity, including the ritual sacrifice of animals and/or children. This scare and others are documented in publications by anthropologist Jean La Fontaine.

Also in the second half of the twentieth century, organizations claiming satanic identity emerged in the West, primarily as a form of countercultural protest. Prominent among these is the Church of Satan, as well as its often short-lived offshoots, such as the Temple of Set. Church of Satan founder Anton LaVey was a prolific writer of some celebrity status; among his publications, the *Satanic Bible* is a primary scriptural source for the movement. Most adherents, especially the many who might more accurately be described as interested followers, did not actually worship a satanic devil figure but professed atheism and a concern with criticizing the status quo.

Contemporary anthropological concerns

The most recent decades of anthropology have continued to pursue the study of witchcraft, sorcery, and magic, with most authors extending beyond the mid-twentieth-century structural–functional consensus. Significant nodes of scholarship take up the three themes in relation to subjectivity, experimental forms of participation and methodology, and modernity, the state, and capitalism.

Consistent with anthropology's long interest in magic as a mode of thought, some researchers in recent years have considered magic in relation to subjectivity as a way to understand personhood or as a clue to human consciousness. Examples of such studies may trace connections between magic and self-conceptualizations—for example, by studying dreams—or may consider magic and healing as avenues for power and agency.

A few anthropologists in recent decades have pursued experiential methodology in the study of magic, steering away from the cultural relativism or methodological agnosticism typical of the discipline. Researchers drawn to this approach tend to reject the position of rationality implicit in anthropological theory, which typically treats magic, witchcraft, and sorcery as about something other than what the participants say they are actually about. Authors Susan Greenwood and Ariel Glucklich have used the terms “magical consciousness” and “magical experience,” respectively, to characterize these alternative ways of knowing.

The most significant shift in anthropological studies of magic, witchcraft, and sorcery has come with scholarship in the late twentieth century and early 2000s, in which these phenomena are viewed in relation to modernity, political power, and the state. In some cases, the researchers document magic, witchcraft, and sorcery as they continue to exist and emerge, ever changing in light of a changing world. Important examples include the works of Peter Geschiere on witchcraft in Cameroon and elsewhere. Geschiere retains older understandings about witchcraft's relation to accusation and social control but analyzes examples of witchcraft in the context of modern conditions such as national politics, business, and Western-derived cultural change. A work of wide scope and historical depth, Geschiere's *Witchcraft, Intimacy, and Trust: Africa in Comparison* (2013) identifies a persistent factor in witchcraft as noted by the structural functionalists: accusations and vulnerabilities occur frequently within the scope of intimate relationships, between people closely connected through home and family. Numerous anthropologists post-2000 agree with Geschiere that witchcraft, sorcery, and magic are crucial parts

of modernity and reject claims that magic is antiquated. For example, such studies have documented witchcraft as it has been reconfigured in relation to the state, education, churches, and global financial institutions.

In a few cases, contemporary anthropologists have reconceptualized magic considerably, springboarding from conventional definitions to understand magic as a component in capitalism, transnationalism, and state leadership. Michael Taussig (1997) investigates the powers of the modern state and global capital as forms of magical practice in *The Magic of the State*, an inventive, unconventional work that calls into question typical modes of ethnographic representation. As part of a broader theoretical essay seeking to understand the nature of capitalism and neoliberalism around the millennium, Comaroff and Comaroff (2001) also extend the term magic in new ways.

SEE ALSO: Addiction; Animism; Cognition, Causal; Color; Douglas, Mary (1921–2007); Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (1902–73); Evil; Evolutionism; Functionalism; Gossip; Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien (1857–1939); Magic; Malinowski, Bronisław (1884–1942); Modernity; New Age, Wicca, and Paganism; Pilgrimage; Rationality and Belief; Religion, Health, and Wellbeing; Religion and Science; Religion, Symbolist versus Intellectualist Approaches to; Ritual; Shamanism and Possession; Spirit Possession; Structural Functionalism; Tylor, Edward (1832–1917); United Kingdom, Anthropology in

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